

RIBBLE VALLEY ARG TASK AND FINISH GROUP – 1 FEBRUARY 2022

Cllr S Hore (Chair in place of S Atkinson)	Marshal Scott – Chief Executive
Cllr S Bibby	Jane Pearson – Dir of Resources
Cllr S Fletcher	Nicola Hopkins – Dir of Econ Dev & Planning
Cllr R Thompson	Mark Edmondson – Head of Revs and Bens
	Hassan Ditta – Sen Econ Dev Officer

APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllrs S Atkinson and D Peat.

OMICRON ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT SCHEME

The DoR reminded members as reported to P & F that a third top-up of ARG of £146,048 had been received on 11 January 2022.

This scheme was discretionary, and a scheme had to be designed and adopted to distribute the grants. These were specifically for businesses severely impacted due to the Omicron variant. The deadline for grant payments was the end of March, but a number of prepayment checks are necessary on applicants so the closing date would need to be a couple of weeks before this.

She reminded members what the previous grant schemes had included and the numbers of applications received and grants awarded.

She suggested that businesses in the following sectors be supported and businesses where the main part of their trade is to supply to these sectors:

- Hospitality – where the primary activity is in-person on-site food and beverage consumption – including food courts, pubs, restaurants, bars and cafes.
- Leisure – venues or premises open to customers during the winter season, where the primary activity is to provide indoor opportunities and experiences for culture, recreation, entertainment, celebratory events (including weddings) or days and nights out. Including cinemas, museums, wedding venues, professional event venues, night clubs, tourist attractions, soft play centres, clubs and village halls.
- Travel and Tourism – travel agents, tour operators and travel group businesses.
- Accommodation – where the primary activity is to provide lodging for holidays, travel or other purposes including caravan parks, campsites, guest houses, holiday apartments and B&Bs.

Criteria also needed to be considered where applicants would need to meet all the criteria to be eligible. After some discussion it was agreed that the following criteria would apply –

- Businesses that do NOT qualify for OLHG which is for hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses with a business rates account.
- Businesses that have received previous ARG payments for RVBC
- Businesses must self-declare and provide evidence that the Omicron variant restrictions have made their business suffer significantly eg cancelled bookings/orders of a major drop in income shown on bank statements

- Businesses that have significant business costs such as rent, rates, insurances (not wages) that do not have a business rates account.
- Businesses that are still trading and not in administration, insolvent or in receipt of a striking-off notice
- Businesses that operate full-time and have their main trading address in and operate in the RV area
- Businesses that have not received an ARG from another local authority since November 2020

There would also be some discretion where businesses had changed hands since the first ARG grants.

Members agreed that applications should be sought by invitation email to those businesses who had previously received an ARG grant, but excluding personal care, taxis, takeaways, non-essential retail and medical. This would equate to approximately 90 businesses and it is estimated would result in grant payments if all approved of approximately £180,000.

The DoR now proposed that the grant levels were guided by the OHLG scheme as opposed to the grant levels suggested to P&F committee when it was anticipated the scheme would be open to all sectors –

Rateable value	Grant
£15k or under	£2,667
£15k - £51k	£4,000
Over £51k	£6,000
Businesses without a business rates account would be assessed according to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of business • Level of costs • Funding available 	£500 £1,000 £2,667

It was proposed that the applications be administered by officers within the Economic Development, Business Rates and Finance teams.

Having discussed all the issues and the need to keep the scheme as straight forward as possible to enable it to run alongside the other schemes still operating, members agreed to the sectors, criteria, method of application and grant amounts outlined.

It was agreed a further meeting should be held in early March when an update on unallocated funding could be provided and next steps agreed.

Meeting closed at 2.55pm